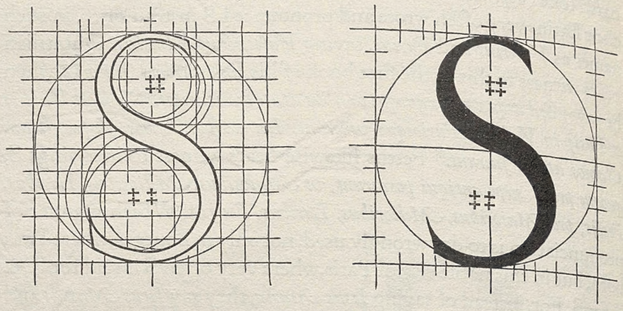

THE letter S here drawn is higher than it is broad. Its breadth is but six units less two thirds of a unit, of which two thirds one is taken from the first of the six squares and the other from the sixth. This refers to the breadth of the lower curve; for the upper one is only three whole units and two halves in breadth, as can be plainly seen in the drawing, in which I have marked eight centres where the point of the compass must be placed, to draw it properly. Frere Lucas Paciolus draws it in different wise, and less clearly, in his *Diuina Proportione,* making several circles and straight perpendicular lines; but I do not put so much labour into it, for, as can be seen at a glance, my method is shorter and simpler, and withal more sure. I say this not boastingly, but the eye discovers the fact. According to said Paciolus, the S is the most difficult to make of all the letters; but in my manner I find it as easy as another. It must be broader below than above, by its nature, because it consists of a circle upon a circle, of which circles if one is to hold firm & in its place upon the other, it is necessary that it be smaller. And for this same good reason, the figure 8 is made of two O's, one upon the other, and the one above is smaller than the one below. Again, we see that a naked man, standing erect on his feet, is broader & more stable at the feet than at his head.

I Gladly make this demonstration here, because I see thousands who ignorantly make the S broader above than below.

S, says Martianus Capella, *sibillum facit dentibus verberatis:* that is to say, S is pronounced by making a hissing sound between the closed teeth. In Greek it is called Σιγμα, & is different in shape, for the Greeks

write it as it were an M lying on its side, thus, Σ; and pronounce it strong and full, almost as we pronounce two S's. When they say Μουσα, they pronounce it *Mussa;* & they never make it thin or soft between two vowels, as we do. If they wish to say *Musa,* or *Philosophia,* they pronounce *Mussa,* or *Philossophia,* and the same wherever it stands between two vowels.

S Is called by the Greeks αρτικον σοιχειον, that is to say, the inceptive letter, because it can be placed, alike in Greek and in Latin, before all the mutes and before M in a syllable or a word of one syllable, as in these words: Σβεννυω, Σπαρθη, Σκηπτρον, Στεμμα, Σθενος, Σφινξ, Σχημα, Σμαραγδος; and in Latin, *Scutum, Spatium, Stamen, Scribo, Strues, Stlemlus, Splendidus.* It can also be added to many other letters at the end of syllables and words, as in these Latin forms: *Scrobs, Frons, Hyems, Ars, Puls, Stirps, Lans, Theseus.* In our French tongue it can be prefixed and suffixed in many ways to many different letters, which I shall forbear to set down here, for brevity's sake, and so that it may afford diversion and employment to some man of eminent intellect who shall desire to assist in bringing order into our French tongue, & reducing it to fixed rules for speaking and writing properly according to the qualities of the letters, syllables, and complete words contained therein.

S Is also called by the Greeks Μοναδικον, that is, solitary,* because in the division of semi-vowels, of which it is one, it stands alone in its force. For the others are divided into four liquids,—L, M, N, R,—and two semi-vowels called double in their attributes—X and Z. Its value in the matter of pronunciation and in metrical quantity is such that sometimes it is stable and sometimes it disappears and is lost, so little force has it. Wherefore it is called by the Greeks Ασημον, that is to say, not noble, and without force.† Not only does it disappear itself but it takes with it the near-by vowel, and very often causes a change in the quantity of the vowel that precedes it, as can be plainly seen in many passages of the Latin poets, from amongst which I will cite a few verses of the father of Latin poets, Ennius, whom Aulus Gellius quotes in the fourth Chapter of Book XII of his *Noctes Atticæ,* when he says:—

Doctus, fidelis, suauis homo, facundus, suoque
Contentus, atque beatus, scitus, secunda loquens in
Tempore commodus, et verborum vir paucorum.‡

* Μοναδικον *has no such meaning so far as one can discover.*

† Ασημον, *inarticulate. Tory's words are 'non noble, & sans efficace.'*

‡ *Ennius, Annales,* VII, 107.